

ASSEMBLY MAJORITY LEADER TORRICO'S 2009 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

This legislative session promises to be another challenging two years as we tackle critical issues facing our state. I have introduced several pieces of legislation to improve our transportation corridors, expand jobs, maintain affordable access to higher education, strengthen our environmental laws, and protect the safety of newborns.

Here are a few of the bills I am carrying this year.

AB 656: Increase Higher Education Funding

The share of California's state budget devoted to higher education has decreased considerably over the past 20 years. By the 2009-2010 budget year our general fund will spend more on incarceration than higher education. To improve access to higher education, and provide \$1 billion in additional funding, AB 656 would levy an oil and gas extraction fee on oil companies. We are the only oil-producing state without such a fee.

AB 744 – Bay Area Express Lane Network

This bill will allow the Bay Area Toll Authority to construct and operate a seamless regional express lane network in the nine-county Bay Area. The express lanes would be open to buses, carpools and solo drivers who choose to pay an adjustable toll. It will create construction jobs, close existing gaps for carpoolers and buses, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and complete an 800-mile network around the Bay Area.

AB 1048-AB 1049 – Safe Surrender

These bills will increase the time parents or guardians have to safely surrender a newborn from the current 72 hours to 30 days. AB 1049 will provide a state income tax form voluntary contribution space to improve funding for Safe Surrender outreach. Although the law has resulted in more than 250 safely surrendered newborns, an even greater number were abandoned since the law took effect in 2001.

AB 846 – Protecting Our Environment

California has been a leader on the environment, health and workplace safety issues for many years. This bill will keep California at the forefront by adjusting civil administrative penalties for inflation and ensuring that penalties imposed deprive the offenders of any economic benefit from breaking the law and endangering our environment.